



The Commission on  
Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

**CWCSEO**

Connecticut General Assembly

**Testimony of the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity  
Presented to the Committee on Aging  
February 9, 2021**

**\*S.B. No. 56 (COMM) AN ACT DETERRING AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS.**

**\*S.B. No. 815 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SMOKING IN NURSING HOMES, ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES AND OTHER HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY.**

**\*S.B. No. 812 (RAISED) AN ACT EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM.**

**\*S.B. No. 817 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SENIOR CENTERS.**

**\*H.B. No. 6353 (RAISED) AN ACT INCREASING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER NONPARENT RELATIVES RAISING CERTAIN CHILDREN.**

**\*S.B. No. 814 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO REVIEW VOLUNTEERISM NEEDS OF THE STATE OMBUDSMAN.**

Senator Slap, Representative Phipps, Senator Kelly, Representative Wilson, and other distinguished members of the Aging Committee; my name is Michael Werner, Law & Policy Fellow focusing on Aging Issues for the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity ("The Commission"). Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

The Commission wishes to testify **in support** of the following bills:

**1. Raised Bill No. 56 An Act Deterring Age Discrimination in Employment Applications.**

- a. The statement of purpose for Raised Bill No. 56 is, "[t]o prevent the use of initial employment applications to discriminate against potential employees based on age."
- b. The proposed bill amends the previous bill by adding a section that states that employers are not allowed to request information about a prospective employees age, date of birth, dates of attendance at or graduation from an educational institute, on an application, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification or the information is required to comply with any provision of state or federal law.

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- c. To allow people to choose how they age, it is vital to the rapidly aging Connecticut that employers do not discriminate based on age. By prohibiting employers from requesting information to identify a potential employee's age, CT will better ensure that there is no unconscious bias at play in the hiring process.
- d. Connecticut is the 6th oldest state in the nation. By 2022, 35% of the US workforce will be age 50 or older. The two fastest growing age cohorts in the US Labor pool are those over 75 and those between 65-74. The economic activity of people ages 50+ on the US GDP is equivalent to the third largest economy in the world, at \$8.3 trillion. Finally, in the AARP survey, 44% of respondents who had applied or interviewed for a job were asked age-related questions.
- e. Again, Connecticut has a very large elderly population-- it's the 6th oldest state in the country, and it is projected that by 2025, older adults will account for over 20% of the population in almost every town in Connecticut. Further, Connecticut has the third highest life expectancy rate in the country, meaning that people are staying healthy longer. In order to maintain a healthy and happy lifestyle, it's very important that the people get to choose how they age—which may mean work for some.
- f. Our Commission worked with the Governor's Council on Women and Girls, after it was first created in January 2019, to help address the needs of these vulnerable constituents. We stand together with them in support of this important legislation, which will help address this issue to positively impact the lives of families throughout Connecticut.

**2. Raised Bill No. 815 An Act Concerning Smoking in Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Facilities and other Housing for the Elderly.**

- a. The statement of purpose for Raised Bill No. 815 is, "[t]o protect the health of elderly persons by restricting cigarette smoking."
- b. The proposed bill amends the previous bill by adding reference to the federal Housing and Urban Development provisions guiding smoke-free public housing, which prohibits smoking in common areas or within twenty-five feet of entrances or exits of public housing for elderly persons, including assisted living facilities.

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- c. The Commission wishes to note an exception for current Long Term Care Facilities resident smokers provided by guidance from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Under the Resident Rights section of CMS Guidance to Surveyors for Longer Term Care Facilities Interpretive Guideline at 42 CFR, §483.15(b), F242 Self-Determination and Participation, **"a change in the facility's policy to prohibit smoking does not affect current residents who smoke.** Current residents are allowed to continue smoking in a designated area, that may be outside weather-permitting. Residents admitted after the facility changes its policy must be informed of this policy at admission." We recommend a clarifying language update for the bill to be in compliance with federal CMS guidance for existing smokers. See, [https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CFCsAndCoPs/downloads/som107ap\\_pp\\_guidelines\\_lf\\_cf.pdf](https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CFCsAndCoPs/downloads/som107ap_pp_guidelines_lf_cf.pdf)

**3. Raised Bill No. 812 An Act Expanding Eligibility for the Alzheimer's Disease Respite Program.**

- a. The statement of purpose for Raised Bill No. 812 is, "[t]o increase access to Alzheimer's disease respite program
- b. Through the bill, no one with Alzheimer's who participates will receive more than \$3,500 for services in any fiscal year. Some of the services that they can receive are Homemaker services, adult day care, companion services, among others. The commissioner will adopt regulations in accordance with the law, including standards for eligibility, the basis for priority, provider reimbursement levels, and fee schedules for copayments, among others. Finally, the commissioner may allocate any funds appropriated in excess of \$500,000 for the program among the five area agencies on aging.
- c. In Connecticut, it is estimated that there are almost 80,000 individuals aged 65+ are living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia. That number is anticipated to increase significantly over the next two decades. The disease can be enormously stressful for both those inflicted and those who love them. Informal caregivers, such as friends and family, provide the majority of care for people with Alzheimer's. In Connecticut, it's estimated that family and friends provide an estimated \$2.5 billion in unpaid care to individuals living with Alzheimer's and dementia. These informal caregivers often report symptoms of depression and anxiety and have poorer health outcomes than



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their peers who do not provide such care. Due to Connecticut's aging population, the need for better support for people with Alzheimer's is a necessity.

#### **4. Raised Bill No. 817 An Act Concerning Senior Centers.**

- a. The statement of purpose for Raised Bill No. 817 is, "[t]o support and expand services offered by senior centers."
- b. The proposed bill amends the previous bill by updating the municipal agent statute to include staff members of a senior center. The bill further establishes "multipurpose senior centers" in statute, while providing certain dissemination responsibilities to the Department of Aging and Disability Services.
- c. Section 3 puts administrative, data collection & dissemination responsibilities for assistance for senior centers to our Commission (CWCSEO), calling on the executive director to assign necessary personnel to perform such duties. The bill further calls for our agency to lead the establishment and facilitation of a state-wide senior center work group, as described in section 4.
- d. While we believe the work of this task force fits squarely with the mandated purpose of the Commission, and we are eager to lead in the work, **our ability to do so is contingent on filling a critical Aging Policy Analyst vacancy.**
- e. In February of 2018, our agency submitted the Senior Center Task Force Final Report, to the Aging Committee as a result of Special Act 16-7. The work product of the resulting deliberations included recommendations, which are addressed in this bill. The report shines an important light on the reality of senior centers not being recognized for their contributions. In some ways, these organizations have been a forgotten workforce that have shown themselves to be critical during the coronavirus pandemic. The need for this bill was apparent pre-virus but is especially urgent now. Because senior centers are largely underdeveloped, offerings and quality of programs may vary largely based on which community a senior resident resides in. This bill works to address the need for core competencies and coordinating support for senior centers, so they may deliver better outcomes and help our older residents to age well in Connecticut.





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**5. Raised Bill No. 6353 An Act Increasing Financial Assistance for Grandparents and Other Nonparent Relatives Raising Certain Children.**

- a. The statement of purpose for Raised Bill No. 6353 is, “[t]o reduce financial burdens on grandparents and other relatives raising needy children.”
- b. The payment shall be giving when the head of the household is a nonparent caretaker relative and legal guardian of the child, and will be equal to 75% of the prevailing monthly foster care rate per child, based on the child’s age and medical condition, and to be paid by the Department of Children and Families.

**6. Raised Bill No. 814 An Act Establishing a Task Force to Review Volunteerism Needs of the State Ombudsman.**

- a. The statement of purpose for Raised Bill No. 814 is, “[t]o establish a task force to review volunteerism needs of the State Ombudsman and make recommendations.”
- b. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) provides a critical service to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of the residents of long-term care facilities in Connecticut. The Resident Advocates (RA) program consists of volunteers who assist the LTCOP with monitoring and investigating potential abuse. Given the sensitive nature of this work, there are numerous training and reporting requirements, which can lead to attrition of volunteers over time. The LTCOP has limited time and resources available when it comes to taking on the training responsibilities of new volunteers and must therefore be deliberate when it comes to deploying agency assets. The Commission recommends supporting the guidance and direction of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, in her work with the Department of Aging & Disability Services, as they seek to onboard the special type of people required to successfully fulfill these important and demanding volunteer roles.